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ABSTRACT

Opening activites (to create an atmosphere of cooperation and a desire to work, explore, and learn together) and closing activities (to summarize what has happened or been learned) for outdoor education programs are described. All activities are intended to incite enthusiasm to learn and make the learning activity a desired, joyful experience. Opening activities are "Who Am I?" "Rope Circle," "Color Search Puzzle," "Back to Back Stand Up," "Names on Foreheads," "Rope Duo," and "Scavenger Hunt." Activities suitable for either opening or closing are "Johnny Whoops," "Kim's Game," "Magic Sticks," "Names on Back," "Snail," and "Peanut Hunt." Closing Activities are "Appreciations," "Animal House," "Crazy Walk," "Knots--Web of Life," "Lap Game," "Pass a Smile, Squeeze, Clap," "Pruii-Raincloud," "Sound Off," and "Rain Storm." Six resource books are listed, with information on price and availability. (MH)

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PREFACE

On every outdoor education program, be it an hour or a day, the leader needs to have a few good activities "up his sleeve".

Opening activities are needed to get the group in the mood breakdown barriers of shyness or reluctance to participate. One needs to create an atmosphere of cooperation and a desire to work, explore and learn together.

Closing activities, on the other hand, should serve the purpose of summarizing what has happened or has been learned. The group should now enjoy working together and helping one another. It is a good time to reinforce this concept.

Some of the activities are quiet, some are energetic, all are aimed at inciting enthusiasm to learn and make the learning activity a desired, joyful experience.

I would like to extend my appreciation to Mr. David W. Stokes, Ranger/Naturalist, at the Massachusetts Audubon Society, Blue Hills Interpretive Centres for conducting some of these activities at a workshop which I attended in Saratoga Springs, N.Y., U.S.A.

WALTER MINGIE

OPENING ACTIVITIES

1. "Who Am I?" Materials needed: one card per person on which an animal's name is printed. Attach the string to the card so that it will slip over the head. The cards are worn on the back and the players attempt to find out who they are by asking questions which require a Yes or No answer. (6-30 players, moderately active).

2. Rope Circle. Materials needed: one strong rope. All players sit on the floor in a circle outside of the rope circle. They hold on to the rope, lie down on their backs, and pull themselves up into a sitting position, then into a standing position. This is a cooperative activity.

   While standing, the rope can be passed around and, as the knot comes to each person, they say their name. (10-30 players, moderately active).

3. Colour Search Puzzle. Materials needed: a box of coloured paints or a box of coloured crayons for each group of ten, and paper.

   Each player in the group is allowed three seconds to draw a line on the paper. Each player in turn selects a colour and continues the line started by the previous player. (Lines may zig-zag or circle or cross, etc.). When all players have had their turn to draw, the paper is cut into the same number of pieces as there are players. Each player must help piece the puzzle together. (3-15 players, quiet).

4. Back to Back Stand Up: This demonstrates the need to work together to solve a problem (6-30 players, moderately active).

5. Names on Foreheads. Materials needed: a white card and pencil for each player. Players sit in a circle, facing the centre, and attempt to write their name on the card while holding it on their forehead (5-25 players, quiet).

6. Rope Duo. Materials needed: one skipping rope per player. The players pair up and tie the rope to both of their own wrists, making sure one rope is inside the other. The players are thus tied together. The object is to separate without undoing the rope. (6-30 players, moderately active).

7. Scavenger Hunt. Each player is asked to find something interesting. They then form a circle and, in turn, explain why they choose their object. (5-20 players, moderately active).

EITHER OPENING OR CLOSING ACTIVITIES

1. Johnny Whoops. Players sit in a circle and each one in turn is asked to copy the leader. The leader starts with the small finger on one hand and as he touches each finger says "Johnny, Johnny, Johnny, Johnny, Whoops Johnny, Whoops Johnny, Johnny, Johnny, Johnny, and then folds his arms. Players generally forget to fold their arms. (6-30 players, quiet).

2. Kim's Game. Materials needed may be quickly picked up from the surrounding area, or each player may be asked to find an object. Players view objects and then try to recall them after they are covered. (6-30 players, quiet).

3. Magic Sticks. Materials needed are two sticks. Players sit in a circle facing the centre. The stick passed to the left is accompanied by the word "ZOOM". The stick passed to the right is accompanied by the word "BUZZ". After the players have gotten the idea, then any player can change the stick's direction by passing it back to the player it came from with the proper word. (6-30 players, quiet).

4. Names on Back. Materials needed are names of animals, each attached to a string, to hang over a players neck, on his back. By asking questions with a Yes or No answer, players attempt to find out what animal they are. (5-50 players, moderately active).

5. Snail. Groups of about eight players form a circle holding hands. They are asked to choose a leader and, while still all holding hands, they follow the leader who circles into smaller and smaller circles making a snail effect. The groups are then asked to move from point to point. (8-50 players, active).

6. PEANUT HUNT

Preparation: Scatter peanuts over a wide area so that some are hidden.

Give out cards. Each card has the name of an animal on it. There should be about six cards of each animal, one with a star on it to designate team captain.

Rules: The animals can find the peanuts but cannot pick them up. They may indicate that they have found a peanut by making their animal noise. The captain (who has a small bag) may only pick up peanuts that his kind of animal are pointing at. He cannot pick up peanuts that other animals have discovered.

When all the peanuts appear to have been picked up, "time" is declared and the peanuts picked up are counted.

CLOSING ACTIVITIES

1. Appreciations. Sit in a circle, and, starting with the leader, one at a time say a word of appreciation to the person on your right. In a large group (over 20 people), number in twos and have all the ones do the above, then all the twos, at one time. (Up to 40 players, quiet).

2. Animal House. Materials needed. Four boxes marked 1) Water, 2) Field, 3) Forest edge, 4) Forest, and forty cards picturing animals.

   Players sit in teams relay style. The first player in each team picks up a card, runs, and drops it in the appropriate box. When he returns, the next player goes, and so on. Discuss the cards found in each box. (6-30 players, moderately active).

3. Crazy Walk. All players line up behind the leader and do as he does. It couldbe, for example, "ten steps, three slow steps (11, 12, 13), right foot out, left foot out, knee bend, and bow. Repeat.

   This is an excellent way to move the group from one location to another. (6-30 players, active).

4. Knots - Web of Life. Players in groups of 8-10 hold hands with two different individuals who are not standing next to them. Then the group, without letting the hands go, unravel themselves. (Note: hands may be held loosely and turned in each other).
   (6-30 players, moderately active).

5. Lap Game. Players stand in a circle, left shoulders to the centre. Make the circle quite tight with each player holding the waist of the one in front. All players sit on the lap of the one behind.
(10-50 players, moderately active).

6. Pass a Smile, Squeeze, Clap. Players sit in a circle facing the centre. Starting with the leader, pass a smile around the circle.
(5-25 players, quiet).

7. Pruii - Raincloud. All players with their eyes closed attempt to find Pruii. The player designated as Pruii cannot talk or move. When a player touches another he says "Pruii?". The touched player responds "Pruii". When the touched player does not respond, the searching player holds on to him, opens his eyes, and becomes part of the growing Pruii raincloud.

8. Sound Off. Materials needed are pairs of cards with animal names on them. Cards are passed out, the group scatter, close their eyes, and, by making the sound of their animal, attempt to find their partner. In a second game, a predator, i.e., lion, may be introduced. He also has his eyes closed and attempts to catch the animals. Animals which are grabbed (caught), open their eyes and go to the sidelines and watch.

With the introduction of the predator, there should be less "sounding off" and, of course, some animals will not be able to find their "caught" partner.

9. Rain Storm. Players form a circle and sit facing the centre. The leader walks around inside the circle facing each player in turn. The player who is facing the leader copies the leader's action.

The actions are:

1) rubbing hands together, 2) snapping fingers. 3) clapping thighs, 4) clap (thunder), and then go in reverse.

SELECTED RESOURCES

1. Cowstails and Cobras by Project Adventure/Karl Rohnke. Published by Project Adventure, P.O. Box 157 Hamilton, Mass, 01936, U.S.A. Price $9.95 (plus postage and handling).

2. The New Games Book published by the New Games Foundation. Distributed in Canada by Can. Ed. Media Ltd., 185, Spadina Avenue, Suite 1, Toronto, Ontario, M5T 2C6. Price $6.25 (plus tax, postage and handling).

3. Sharing Nature with Children by Joseph Bharat Cornell, published by Ananda Publications. Distributed by "Earth Sky" 14618 Tyler Foote Crossing Road, Nevada City, California, 95959, U.S.A. Price $4.95 (plus postage and handling).

4. Acclimatization by Steven Van Matre, (a fresh innovative way of introducing young people to the wonders of the out-of-doors). Price $4.50 (plus postage and handling).

5. Acclimatizing by Steven Van Matre (a series of activities for helping individuals build a life long relationship with the natural world). Price $5.50 (plus postage and handling).

6. Sunship Earth by Steven Van Matre (a comprehensive environmental education program for upper elementary students). Price $9.95 (plus postage and handling).

The above three books are published by the American Camping Association, and are distributed by:

Acclimatization Experiences Institute,
P.O. Box 288,
WARRENVILLE,
Illinois, 60555,
U.S.A.

N.B. The prices quoted were those in effect in 1980 and 1981. All are subject to change without notice. The postage and handling charge per book is normally between $1.00 and $2.00.